



Leading the way in maximizing  
the quality of life and opportunities for people  
with spinal cord injuries and diseases  
since 1948

January 14, 2010

Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: GN Docket No. 09-191

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

Founded in 1948, the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (NSCIA) is the nation's oldest and largest civilian organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of Americans living with the results of spinal cord injury and disease (SCI/D) and their families. This number grows by thirty newly-injured people each day. At NSCIA, we educate and empower survivors of spinal cord injury and disease to achieve and maintain the highest levels of independence, health and personal fulfillment.

We fulfill this mission by providing an innovative Peer Support Network and by raising awareness about spinal cord injury and disease through education. Our education programs are developed to address information and issues important to our constituency, policy makers, the general public, and the media, and including injury prevention, improvements in medical, rehabilitative and supportive services, research and public policy formulation.

In recent years, broadband technology has spurred innovations and new opportunities in virtually all aspects of life. Through telemedicine applications, Americans are able to see a doctor from the convenience of their homes and learn about ways to improve their health. Unfortunately, not all Americans are able to take advantage of these exciting innovations. For too many Americans a broadband connection remains out of reach. For people with serious conditions such as spinal cord injuries, the ability to share medical data with a physician or receive up-to-date information regarding their medical care can mean avoiding serious complications and lengthy hospital visits. The ability to connect online with peers with similar conditions of immeasurable value.



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At this time, it is critical that the FCC focus its efforts on connecting all Americans through the National Broadband Plan. This marks a significant opportunity for the Commission to help underserved groups of Americans, like people with disabilities, connect to life-changing broadband technology. Broadband, an essential part of equalizing the playing field for people with spinal cord injury and disease, must begin with affordable access and must encourage the innovation that will improve the lives of people with disabilities.

We are concerned that the Commission's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the Open Internet will detract from this goal, and slow the realization of 100 percent broadband access and adoption. The net neutrality regulations contained in the NPRM could disincentivize private sector investment and innovation, which is imperative to building out the next generation of the Internet and creating the cutting-edge innovations that change our lives. Current levels of investment must be maintained to ensure that broadband technology reaches every home in America at affordable rates.

We urge the Commission to take advantage of the opportunity to bring broadband to all Americans once and for all. Those who are underserved by this technology potentially have the most to gain.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

K. Eric Larson  
Executive Director / CEO